

CHARLES W. LENG AND THE NEW YORK ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BY WM. T. DAVIS

On January 24, 1941, Charles William Leng died at his home, 439 Clove Road, Staten Island, and the New York Entomological Society lost one of its most illustrious members, and the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences its Director for the past twenty-one years. Mr. Leng was born on Staten Island, April 6, 1859, but shortly thereafter the family removed to Brooklyn, Long Island, where they remained until March, 1879, when they returned to Staten Island.

While living in Brooklyn he was a student at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute from which he graduated in 1877, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science. He also helped start the Brooklyn Entomological Society and drew the seal in use on the cover of the Bulletin of the Society since 1878. He was one of the incorporators of the Brooklyn Society in 1885, and served again in that capacity fifty years later in 1936, when the Society was re-incorporated. It was under the auspices of the Brooklyn Society that he commenced his studies in Coleoptera, and the publication of his Synopsis of the Cerambycidae. He aided the Brooklyn Society in many ways, and was elected its Honorary President on December 14, 1922.

He contributed to the first volume of the JOURNAL OF THE NEW YORK ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY in 1893, and, with Mr. Beutenmuller commenced the publication of a "List of the Coleoptera of North Eastern America," and also of a "Preliminary Handbook of the Coleoptera of North Eastern America."

In the published minutes of our Society for 1902, we read that: "Mr. Charles W. Leng, of 4 Fletcher St., N. Y., was proposed as an active member by Mr. Davis," at the meeting of March 18, 1902, and was duly elected at the April meeting. At that time he was an iron merchant, but gave up his mercantile interests to become Director of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1919. He was one of the founders of the old Natural

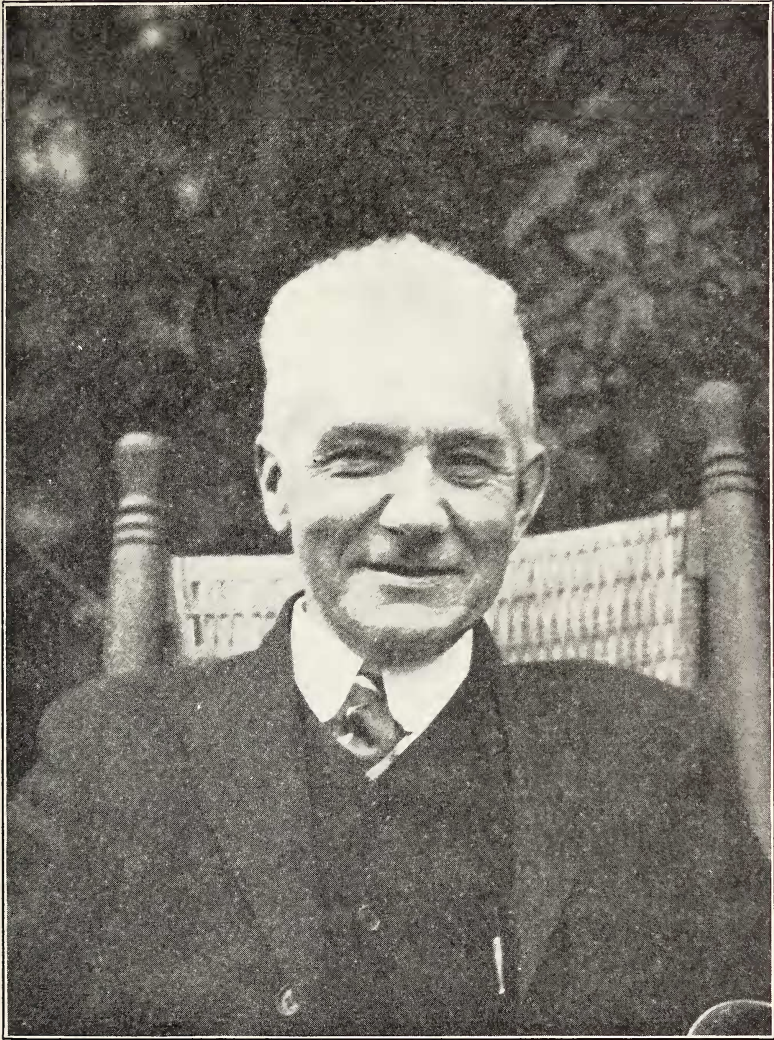
Science Association of Staten Island in 1881, which later became the Institute.

Upon his election to membership in 1902, Mr. Leng became a regular attendant at the meetings of our Society, and his help both as an executive and as an entomologist was soon apparent. He was elected Vice-President, January 6, 1903, and served as President from January 15, 1907, to January 2, 1912, when he became Secretary. He held that office for 19 years or until January 6, 1931. Meanwhile he wrote many entomological papers as well as a "History of the New York Entomological Society, 1893-1919," which appeared in the JOURNAL for 1918. It is to Mr. Leng and Mrs. Annie Trumbull Slosson that we owe much of the recorded history of our Society. Mr. Leng was solicitous for preserving the memory of his entomological friends, and accordingly published appreciative notices of their lives, both in our JOURNAL and in the Bulletin of the Brooklyn Entomological Society. Of happy memory to some of the older members of the Society are the field days spent on Staten Island, which often terminated at the home of Mr. Leng and with an examination of his extensive collection of Coleoptera.

W. S. Blatchley and C. W. Leng were the authors of "Rhynchophora or Weevils of North Eastern America," published in 1916. This useful work gives descriptions of nearly 1,100 species and includes many helpful illustrations.

In 1920 Mr. John D. Sherman, Jr., published Mr. Leng's monumental work, a "Catalogue of the Coleoptera of America, North of Mexico," which enumerates 18,000 named forms, citing the original description of each species, and giving in a general way its known distribution. This great work includes an Essay on Classification, as well as a Bibliography of Taxonomic Coleopterology (to January 1st, 1919). He lists 141 of his own papers on Coleoptera, and notices of the passing of his entomological friends.

In the Proceedings of the Natural Science Association of Staten Island for January 12, 1884, there is a paper on "The Cicindelidæ of Staten Island," which appears to have been Mr. Leng's earliest contribution to entomology. In the years that followed he published many notes and papers in the proceedings of the



CHARLES W. LENG
(Photograph by Wm. T. Davis, Oct. 15, 1914)

Staten Island society. After becoming Director of the Institute in 1919, he turned his attention more and more to the history of Staten Island, and was the author of several papers on local history. In 1930 the Lewis Historical Publishing Company brought out four volumes of "Staten Island and Its People," by Charles W. Leng and Wm. T. Davis. As the work was favorably received, a fifth volume was issued in 1933. The getting together of the material for these volumes was a considerable task, and occupied much of Mr. Leng's attention for several years. He was very helpful to the many who desired information concerning their ancestors and the old families of the Island, and he acquired a considerable knowledge of the local ecclesiastical records.

There could hardly have been a more helpful man than the genial Mr. Leng. Whatever aid he could render was given so pleasantly and with such good will, that naturally he was often consulted. He always had time, or appeared to have, which is said to be one of the attributes of the competent man. It is with pleasure that the writer looks backward over the sixty-one years of close association with one so gifted and of such a happy disposition.